

Rebecca Gratz to Maria Gist Gratz

May 4, 1828

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I am astonished My dear Sister to find that I have been so long your debtor _ and for a letter too so full of interesting description _ that I have been enamoured of the Kentucky river and its picturesque scenery ever since _ it is hard to be so encompassed with cares and dull realities _ that the very wings of imagination are clipped short off, and one cannot even fancy such a delightful possibility as feasting their natural vision with such a prospect _ well I must be content to adopt my friend Mrs. Merediths idea _ who means to cast a downward glance on the wonders & beauties of this excellent globe _ during her passage to a higher sphere. when she "has shaken off this mortal coil" _ and in the mean time my sweet Sister let me profit by a transcript of your journeyings and as you are directing your attention to the fine Arts. I may even have the pencils aid when that instrument can better display your taste _ and yet; to tell truth I wish nothing more graphic than your pen in cases of that nature. There is nothing that I can send you from the bustling city which can compare with it _ the important vibrations of a compact community _ where every day casualies alarm _ agitate _ or change the destiny of some portion, and afford subject of brief interest to all _ is a fertile subject for the moralist _ but one sickens with the oft repeated tale _ and it all ends in the stale truism that we are all to take our turns in the ups & downs of life _

were you not surprised at the something new in our family of Ben Ettings engagement? I believe he has been very fortunate in his choice _ the young lady bears a very high character and she writes with a degree of modest dignity which speaks highly in her favor _ he is deeply in love, and has other [provokatives?] to a speedy marriage _ such as redeeming the character of the name _ setting a good example &c _ indeed we want some exhilarating change _ or our rigid features will become so fixed. that our risible muscles will lose their [pliability] _ Henry has recovered, and gone to visit his sister elect and try the combustibility of his own heart among the other lasses of Richmond hill _

The family in Baltimore are very indignant at the insult put upon poor Ellen _ by the desertion of her lover _ and it is more severe as being wholly [end of page]

unexpected _ this was a school attachment _ on her part undiminished by time & separation _ and certainly on his a most flagrant instance of fickleness. the engagement was long protracted _ they had ample time to test the strength of their affections _ and when he did ask _ every body expected he was ready to take his bride _ If he had not been a mean silly vain fellow _ a girl might have some consolation in her disappointment

but to wear the willow for such discreditable attachment _ is enough to cure love _ but kill with mortification _ he has gone to reside in New York _

This seems quite an era of strange events in our community _ but I dare say Hyman or Jo has told Ben of all the gossip and of course you have heard of Mr. Tilghmans ill timed gallantry and its unhappy result _ he is a light-headed & perhaps light principled character tho' past 40 and the father of a large family _ two of his daughters were belles this winter and his wife accompanied them to all fashionable parties _ enter-tained at home, and seemed to renew her own youth in her daughters pleasures _ [which] are now at an end _ one of Mr. Ts professional protege's a youth of about 22 married a young lady from the country and on bringing her to town introduced her to his patron, as one of his best friends _ the gentleman received her very kindly and endeavoured to make himself so agreeable, that she requested her husband, not to invite him as she felt no disposition to entertain or be enter-tained by Mr. T_ however supposing it was only Mr. Tilghmans manners that Mrs. Browne objected to, he told her, that she would like him better when they were more acquainted _ in a very short time after; [she] [related] their interviews, & Mr. Brown thought proper to chastise the freedom of Mr. Tilghmans conduct _ and took occasion to give him a public horsewhipping at mid-day in front of the state house in chesnut Street _ this was followed by a challenge from T_ which not being accepted he prosecuted Browne for an assault _ and in this trial such excitement and evidence appeared _ that the award for damages was [one] cent _ [end of page]

Mr. Tilghman totally subdued _ disgraced _ and humbled left the city to recover his composure _ when his [magnamous] wife followed him into his retire-ment _ consoled forgave and I hope will reclaim him _ as for the Brownes they are victorious, but the notoriety of the whole affair _ the appearance of the Lady at court to prove that she had been insulted and the variety of reports respecting them _ are so at variance with the [delicacy] of a young female _ [and] a bride too _ that I think I would rather the offender had been privately avoided than publicly punished _ I hope however good, will come out of it _ if there be one spark of virtue in the nature of Ben Tilghman, his wifes conduct must fan it into light _ which may purify his heart, and his innocent daughters _ make him respect other women's fame _

Our children are well, the moses' have been a good deal disturbed by the death of their Aunts _ their Father passed a week in New York with his family & returned a good deal depressed. but they are recovering from the shock _ the Hay's & Ettings unite in affectionate remembrance _ we are just in that uncomfortable unsettled state which House-hunting creates _ but I take as [...] [...]ble] as possible _ determined that our brothers shall fix on one _ [our?] turn will come, when about to take possession _ I am sorry that we must not hope to see you this summer _ but as it is not in my nature to do more than defer _ I shall still look to the Autumn for that happiness Your boys are certainly more talented than other children _ My sweet Howard can talk as well for Washington as he could have done himself

on such an occasion _ and the other boys make Horace a baby _ by comparison with their manliness _ he loves to read of battles & brave men _ but looks more calculated for sedentary than active life _ he & Sarah talk of you all constantly and are delighted with your messages of kindness to them _ our Brothers & Sisters are all well Hyman received Bens letter by Mr. Christie yesterday _ present my best love to my dearest Ben _ tell him we find that, “enduring patience makes the burden light” _ it is a year since he laboured so hard to commence the business, which Heaven only knows when time will finish _ Adieu My beloved Maria _ believe me always your sincerely Affectionate Sister RG

[Address:]

To

Mrs. Benjamin Gratz

Lexington Ky